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some business in the little town, and strode up the road attired in a glistening mackintosh, leggings, and cap, a costume that altered his appearance so completely that no one would ever guess he was a valet unless they were told.

Feeling that a glass of beer would keep the damp out of his system, he entered the hotel, and incidentally learned of the Frenchman's presence.

"Why, he was here a minute ago," said the proprietor. "I'd have liked you to meet him, Mr. Rice—he's a warrior, is Monseer Brun."

Rice, by reason of his travels, was an authority on the French nation. As a whole, one gathered, he did not think much of it, though there were exceptions, as everyone knew.

He finished his beer, and trudged forth refreshed. It would have been interesting to have learned his views if someone had told him that Clancy, of the New York Detective Bureau, had passed swiftly out of the bar the moment before he entered it.

THAT evening the young woman who attended to telegrams at Saginaw was somewhat puzzled by the text of a message handed in by the valued guest of the local hotel. The address was a word registered in New York; but the remainder was curiously simple, yet unmeaning, for it read:

The missing word was navaja.

She bent her brows in vain over the enigma, and might have been gratified had she known that Inspector Steingall, enthroned in his Center-st. sanctum, was compelled to smoke the best part of a cigar before he remembered that Claude Waverton had hesitated, and finally balked altogether, over explaining the craft that enabled him to bring down the gallant looking Tearle so neatly that day on the promenade at Narragansett Pier. It was the only "missing word" he could think of in connection with the Waverton case, and even now "navaja" sounded more like one of Clancy's far fetched jokes than a sober explanation of fact.

Once, however, Steingall had succeeded in locating the incident to which his colleague's telegram referred, his active brain could not dismiss it. He expected a letter from Clancy on Sunday, and was sure that the Little Fellow had despatched the telegram as an *avant courier* merely to perplex the Big Fellow. The letter now in the post would explain everything. Meanwhile, Steingall could not put that curious word out of his mind, and in the long run this is the line of reasoning he adopted:

Tirar le navaja, or "knife throwing," is peculiarly a Mexican custom; a peculiarly unpleasant one too, since an adept in the art can kill a man by this means at many yards' distance. The feat demands the nicest accuracy of hand and eye. If Waverton had acquired the requisite skill, he must have lived in Mexico; so Clancy had evidently ferreted out particulars of the man's earlier life. Oddly enough, on Steingall's desk at that moment lay a letter from John Stratton Tearle, in which the writer informed the chief of the bureau that "owing to certain facts that have come to my knowledge recently," he would probably be able within the next few days to give some startling information "as to the past history of the person who claims to be Claude G. Waverton."

Charles Scott had been in the Argentine six years, and Tearle had come back from Arizona, near the Mexican line, about the time Scott first entered Santander's service.

"Poor devil!" mused Steingall. "The net is closing round him, and I'm dashed if I don't feel sorry for him. He looks and acts like a white man, all the time, and I believe that vindictive little imp Clancy has the same opinion of him. Personally, I shall not be a bit surprised if he doesn't let him slip through his fingers at the eleventh hour."

Whereupon Steingall amused himself by writing a brief analysis of Clancy's telegram, and posting it to Monsieur Brun, at Saginaw, just to prove that one head might be as good as another occasionally.

Clancy chuckled when he read his chief's display of deductive reasoning.

"Pure side!" he muttered. "He wants to show off a bit, now that he is acquiring my method. Still, I wish he was here. How he would enjoy my masterpiece of stage management tomorrow afternoon!"

EARLY on Monday, Monsieur Brun received a telegram from New York which had been handed in at Madison Square the previous evening. It read:

Have despatched code message. Answer may be delayed owing to difference in time.

The prospect of delay did not seem to affect the Frenchman's appetite. He ate a hearty breakfast and lounged about,—for the rain had disappeared, and Saginaw was bathed in sunshine,—and generally wore the aspect of a man who was killing time and liked the task.

About ten o'clock he strolled toward the Waverton place, using a woodland path that gave a short cut over a hill avoided by the road. From the top of the hill he could survey nearly the whole of the park, with its lawns and woods sloping down to Lake Champlain, and, sitting on a tree stump, he watched a high-powered motor-car speeding along the drive.

Claude Waverton was at the steering wheel. Armand was by his side.

"Now," thought Clancy, "if I was in the tonneau, and leaning over the back of their seat, there would be so much French flying about that one might fancy oneself in Lower Canada."

A hooded victoria crawling along the road caught his eye. It halted at the lodge gates, and, after a brief colloquy between its occupant and the gatekeeper's wife, passed in and headed straight for the house, while the woman stood and gazed after it curiously.

"Now, who in the world is that?" demanded Clancy, almost with anxiety. "Mrs. Waverton is not due here till four o'clock. Surely, it cannot be Mrs. Delamar! Perhaps it isn't a woman at all. I'll find out from the driver after he has deposited his fare."

He hurried down to the road, and waited nearly twenty minutes before the victoria rumbled back toward Saginaw.

"Hi! Are you passing O'Hara's?" cried Clancy. "O'Hara's" was the name of the hotel.

"Yes, Sir, jump in," said the driver; for by this time everyone in Saginaw had seen or heard of Monsieur Brun.

"No, no, I jump up—so," and Clancy was on the box. Within a minute he had ascertained that the vehicle had brought from the railway station no less a person than Mrs. Waverton, "an' the poor thing divorced, an' all!" grinned the man.

"Is she?" grinned Clancy, his face creased with merriment, while his very soul writhed within him; for he felt that this unexpectedly early visit presaged developments that he could not control.

"One would ha thought he'd seen enough of that husband of hers, she was that anxious to be rid of him. But she isn't goin' to stay here. I have to call for her in an hour, and bring her back to O'Hara's."

"Ah, dat excellent O'Hara! Den I shall zee de lady," said Clancy.

"Most likely, Sir."

It was, indeed, more than likely. Clancy was very angry with Doris Waverton. She was on the boards at least five hours too soon, and such a contretemps would annoy the most phlegmatic of dramatists, let alone a mercurial playwright like a detective.

IN very truth, her arrival at The Dene had wrought something akin to consternation. When she alighted from the victoria, and waited for a few seconds to consult her watch and speak to the driver, a distressed footman had hastily summoned Rice, who was regarded by the household as Waverton's deputy in matters that could not be decided without instructions.

So the valet was just in time to hurry forward and greet his mistress as she entered the hall. He noticed that she was dressed in black, and was instantly aware of a composure of manner and perceptible stiffening of demeanor toward himself that were markedly absent during their last meeting. In fact, Doris was now convinced that Rice was a party to the fraud carried out by his employer, and the belief had weakened her faith in human nature.

"Is Mr. Waverton at home?" she demanded coldly, and Rice fancied she placed a sarcastic emphasis on the name.

"He is motoring about the grounds, Ma'am," said Rice.

"Kindly send for him, or go yourself, and tell him he must come at once. I shall wait for him in the library."

Without vouchsafing another word of explanation, she crossed the hall. Her glance fell on her own portrait, smiling from the landing, and, by a curious chance, the first object her eyes found in the library was a photograph of herself, placed on a writing table near a window.

She examined it critically, almost scornfully. "What a poser the man is!" she thought. "I suppose he imagines now that the role of regretful husband is a good one to adopt."

Nevertheless, her smooth brow was ruffled by discovering the portrait on a table that was obviously in regular use by the wretch who had usurped the name and place of Claude Waverton. Moreover, her recollection of him—be it remembered she had seen him only once by night, and in the

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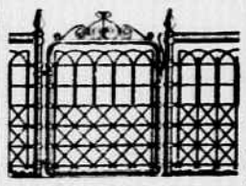

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